

Local 1181-1061
Amalgamated Transit Union A.F.L.-C.T.O.



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December 6, 2011

Dear Parent,

As the bus drivers, mechanics and escorts who safely get your children to and from school each day, we felt the need to reach out to you directly in light of the Mayor's false alarms about a possible school bus strike. I can imagine his press conference caused great concern for you and your family. The last thing you need during the stress of the holiday season is to worry about how your son or daughter is going to get to school.

So let me put your fears to rest – there is no impending bus strike. Our school bus drivers, mechanics, and escorts are planning to show up to work every day this holiday season as we always have because we know how much you depend on us to get your children safely to their schools and back home each day.

The Mayor has created unnecessary anxiety and fear by politicizing the situation. We think you should know the truth.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181's 9,000 school bus drivers, mechanics and escorts have been taking New York City children to school for more than 40 years. We are highly-trained and experienced workers who have spent our entire careers making sure city children get to school safely. And for 32 years, it has been city policy to ensure that skilled and reliable people like us are the ones behind the wheel and at the bus stop. You put your children's lives in our hands every single morning. It goes without saying that we had better be the best at what we do.

But now, despite 32 years of support for this policy, the city has suddenly changed its tune and wants to ship out school bus contracts to the cheapest bidder, with no provisions in place to guarantee they hire the best and most experienced drivers, mechanics and escorts or any protections for our wages and benefits. It's another attack by the Mayor on working people - like you - who are struggling to make ends meet and provide for their families.

We aren't about to let the City make such a careless, dangerous move without a fight. We as bus drivers, mechanics, escorts and parents should raise our voices and demand that the City continue to guarantee that the people transporting your children to and from school every day are qualified, responsible, and experienced. We also welcome support for our negotiations to get the same protections from K-12 school bus companies. The casting away of well-trained, experienced employees in favor of companies who are simply seeking to provide bare-bones service at the lowest possible cost is a risky, ill-conceived move by the Mayor that directly threatens the safety and security of our children.

If you want an example of what happens when we let career bus drivers go in favor of cheap and untrained workers look no further than the discount bus industry. As New Yorkers saw all too well on March 13, 2011, when 15 individuals were killed in a horrific casino bus accident in the Bronx, lack of regulations and employment conditions put the lives of every passenger onboard in danger. Imagine if that was a school bus and those passengers were your children.

We disagree with the City about the quality and experience of bus drivers, mechanics and escorts New York City's children deserve. But there will be no strike this holiday season, and we're hopeful we can avoid a potential disruption in service for your family. And we will do everything we can in our power to ensure parents and their children get the level of service and safety they rightly expect and deserve.

I want to encourage you to reach out directly to the Mayor's Office and to Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott. Tell them that the safety of your children is nothing to compromise on. Demand that experienced school bus employees stay on the job. We believe the interests of the parents, children, bus drivers, mechanics, and escorts involved here are the same and are hopeful that the Mayor will listen.

Cost-cutting is important. But risking the well-being of our children and jeopardizing the jobs and benefits of hard working people under the auspices of saving a few bucks is just plain wrong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Cordiello". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Cordiello" clearly distinguishable.

Michael Cordiello

President / Business Agent

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